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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

Intelligence Memorandum

Recent Communist Logistical Developments in Indochina

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
13 February 1973

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

RECENT COMMUNIST LOGISTICAL
DEVELOPMENTS IN INDOCHINA

SUMMARY

1. During the second week following the cease-fire, Communist logistical forces throughout Indochina sustained a significant level of resupply activity, including the possible infiltration of supplies by sea to South Vietnam. In the Laotian Panhandle, North Vietnamese logistic forces are preparing for activity following a cease-fire. International shipping of supplies to North Vietnam by sea appears on the upswing, and, during the reporting period, at least two ships, which had been caught there since the mining, departed from Haiphong harbor.

2. Intercepted enemy communications reflected the first explicit reference since the cease-fire to supplies moving through southern North Vietnam en route for South Vietnam. Meanwhile, North Vietnam's plan to deliver some 6,600 tons of supplies to northern Laos during the first three weeks of February is being implemented by diverting some supplies formerly headed south into northern Laos. Overall, in southern North Vietnam the pace of detected activity picked up from that noted during the first week of the cease-fire: the rail line is now being used, reports of vehicle movements were higher, and the level of coastal shipping along the southern coast increased.

[REDACTED] COMINT from southern Laos also reflected a high level of vehicle and tank movement during the period, including

Note: This memorandum, prepared by the Office of Economic Research, is the second in a series summarizing Communist logistical developments since the cease-fire in South Vietnam. It focuses on the week ending 12 February but includes some information outside that period where it is deemed sufficiently important.

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a 3 February reference to a 70-truck convoy transporting ammunition. Some of the detected traffic has been in support of Communist tactical units in Laos. However, the concentration of traffic in the eastern part of the Panhandle along with the detection of significant activity east of the border makes it likely that cross-border resupply into South Vietnam's Military Region (MR) I is continuing. Photography during the period indicated the Communists apparently succeeded in delivering some supplies by sea into enemy-controlled territory in southern MR I.

4. In the tri-border area of Laos, Cambodia, and South Vietnam, heavy vehicle activity has been under way toward South Vietnam's central highlands and COSVN. The movement of supplies into Tay Ninh Province has also been detected.

DISCUSSION

International Resupply to North Vietnam

5. Current intelligence indicates that the pace of international resupply - by both sea and overland - to North Vietnam is to be sustained at a high level. On 9 February a US helicopter reported that two Cuban merchant ships were departing from the Haiphong harbor escorted by at least six small craft. A 200-foot-long intercoastal freighter followed.

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6. The first Soviet tanker to sail for Haiphong since the mining of North Vietnam's ports - the **Ambarchik** - arrived near Haiphong on 10 February. It is expected to lighten its cargo onto tank barges outside the minefield. On 12 February, the Soviet freighter **Tunguska** arrived offshore bringing 3,700 tons of flour. Just outside the harbor, the Soviet cargo ship **Dalniy** - which arrived in the Haiphong area on 1 February - continues to offload its cargo of wheat flour in the deepwater anchorage east of Cac Ba Island. At least three other ships have recently arrived in the Haiphong - Hong Gay - Cam Pha area. The Cuban **Guisa** with 11,800 tons of sugar is currently offloading its cargo. Details of the operations of the other two ships - the Chinese **Hung Chi 088** and **Hung Chi 089** -- are not complete.

7. In addition to those that have departed, others of the 26 foreign merchant ships trapped within the minefields at Haiphong have begun



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preparations for leaving the area, but no departure dates are known. The Hong Kong owner of five Chinese-chartered Somali and British freighters has notified Vietnamese authorities that all of its vessels in Haiphong "would depart soon." [REDACTED]

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8. Hanoi's short-term planning includes a continued heavy reliance on overland transport. On 1 February, North Vietnam's commercial counselor in Peking informed Hanoi that it would receive 64,600 tons of foodstuffs during the month: included are about 35,000 tons slated for overland transport.

9. The North Vietnamese appear to be further improving their capability to move petroleum supplies into and through the country. Aerial photography [REDACTED] showed about 80 miles of new petroleum pipeline under construction in North Vietnam from a point 16 miles south of Ninh Binh to near the Cu Dai petroleum storage area northwest of Vinh. Much of the line is dual and parallels the existing line. [REDACTED] photography revealed a second petroleum pipeline at the North Vietnam/Chinese border extending northward and paralleling the existing pipeline, past the petroleum storage area at P'ing-hsiang to its present terminus a mile north of there.

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Reconstruction of Lines of Communication

10. The Communists are continuing to work on their primary rail system. When last seen in late January, the main north-south rail lines between the Chinese border and Vinh were operational, although traffic was using a pontoon/fixed span bridge over the Red River and a rail ferry over the Song Ma River at Thanh Hoa. Rail yards along the Hanoi to Dong Dang line and on the Thai Nguyen loop (Kep to Thai Nguyen to Hanoi) also had been repaired, and additional through rail tracks were being rebuilt in the larger yards. The 80-mile Thanh Hoa to Vinh rail line was restored for through traffic by 23 January, using repaired main bridges and bypasses; however, through rail traffic was not yet possible on the Vinh to Cho Phong rail line, as long sections south of the Song Ca River were serviceable only for shuttling operations.

11. Restoration of the rest of the rail system is largely a matter of choice for the North Vietnamese. During LINEBACKER II, they removed two spans from each of the Hai Duong bridges on the Hanoi to Haiphong rail line, apparently to give these multi-span bypass bridges an appearance of unserviceability and to induce US aircraft not to attack them and possibly damage the substructure. Equipment to replace the missing spans is readily available, so they can be replaced at will. Similarly, the rail bypass bridge

[redacted]

at Haiphong which was rendered unserviceable by removing the two barges that closed the gap can be easily reinstated. Subsequent information may show this work already completed.

Logistic Activity in Southern North Vietnam

12. Shipping activity within southern North Vietnam increased during the period. COMINT indicates that supplies are now moving south and west from the Vinh area following a brief hiatus immediately after the cease-fire. On 3 February an element of Binh Tram 18 reported that 45 vehicles were "bringing down all types of cargo," and subsequent intercepts from the Vinh area indicated that during a 12-hour period on 4 February 98 vehicles had moved northward and 227 vehicles southward past a vehicle checkpoint station. The final destination of these vehicles was not indicated. On 6 February, logistic elements in the Vinh area revealed that at least 50 tons of explosives and ammunition had been dispatched for South Vietnam. A total of 62 vehicles were dispatched, indicating that the total tonnage moving south was probably greater than the referenced 50 tons.

13. Following the announcement of a campaign to deliver 6,600 tons of supplies to North Vietnamese forces in northern Laos during the first three weeks of February, significant amounts of supplies have been detected being transshipped there. Some supplies are being diverted from southward movement to fulfill the plan: a directive of 3 February stipulated that some cargo formerly destined for South Vietnam would be transported along Routes 6 and 65 to northern Laos. To date, more than 1,000 tons of cargo have been detected en route to northern Laos since this campaign was begun. The deliveries include antiaircraft artillery, mortar, machinegun, and recoilless rifle ammunition and explosives.

14. Coastal shipping along the North Vietnamese Panhandle has increased sharply. Since 19 January [redacted] large numbers of supply vessels operating roughly between Thanh Hoa and the southern limit of North Vietnamese waters. Communist minesweeping activity at Quang Khe and increased levels of communications by the North Vietnamese Directorate of Coastal Shipping indicate a pick-up in coastal resupply.

15. Related to this increase, the North Vietnamese tanker *Cuu Long* may have resumed its role in the coastal delivery of petroleum. It was noted in message traffic on 4 February, possibly in the Quang Khe area. Last noted on 24 December en route from China, fully loaded, the *Cuu Long* can carry 1,620 tons of cargo which could be offloaded directly into the petroleum pipeline system at Quang Khe. Other petroleum deliveries to Quang Khe include 12 petroleum-carrying craft with a capacity of about 1,000 tons photographed there [redacted]

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[REDACTED]

Logistical Activity in the DMZ, Laos, and Cambodia

16. Communist logistical forces in southern Laos apparently are making preparations for operations in the Laotian Panhandle following a cease-fire. On 10 February, instructions were relayed from Military Region 559 -- the senior North Vietnamese logistics command outside North Vietnam -- that after "D-Day in Laos" Routes 911, 914, and 99 would be the primary routes in use through the areas of operation of Binh Trams 32, 33, and 34, respectively. Routes 911 and 914 are part of the original Ho Chi Minh Trail, but Route 99 is newer and is a well-engineered, well-camouflaged route.

17. [REDACTED] vehicle activity in the North Vietnam/Laos border area recently reached the highest level of the current dry season.

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[REDACTED] As has been the case since the cease-fire began, the heaviest activity was concentrated at the Ban Karai Pass, where an average of 60 southbound movements were detected daily during the past week. Photography during the period showed large numbers of trucks active along Route 137 just north of the Pass.

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18. Similarly, COMINT has continued to reflect sustained vehicle activity within the Panhandle. On 3 and 5 February, rear services elements in the eastern Panhandle between the DMZ and the A Shau Valley reported that large numbers of vehicles were on the move, including a 70-truck convoy moving ammunition. Subsequently, on 8 February, it was reported that 31 vehicles -- capable of moving 120 tons of supplies -- were moving south through Binh Tram 32; however, details of the cargo being moved were not disclosed. There were indications that at least some of this activity was in support of heavy fighting in southern Laos, around Muong Phalane and Paksong. In support of continued heavy activity, day-to-day repair work on the roads continues, and the main north-south corridor through the Panhandle is reported to be in excellent condition.

19. Logistical activity on the feeder routes into northern South Vietnam has been sporadic, but there is evidence of continuing supply movements. During the period 7-11 February, for example, 55 trucks -- capable of moving more than 200 tons of supplies -- were detected moving east on Route 9 from Laos to MR 1. [REDACTED] photography revealed the presence of large numbers of trucks around and just north of the DMZ: on Route 1032, some 230 trucks were spotted in a staging area possibly

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[redacted]

awaiting nightfall to deliver cargo. Large concentrations of vehicles and nearby supplies were also reported on Route 102 in the DMZ.

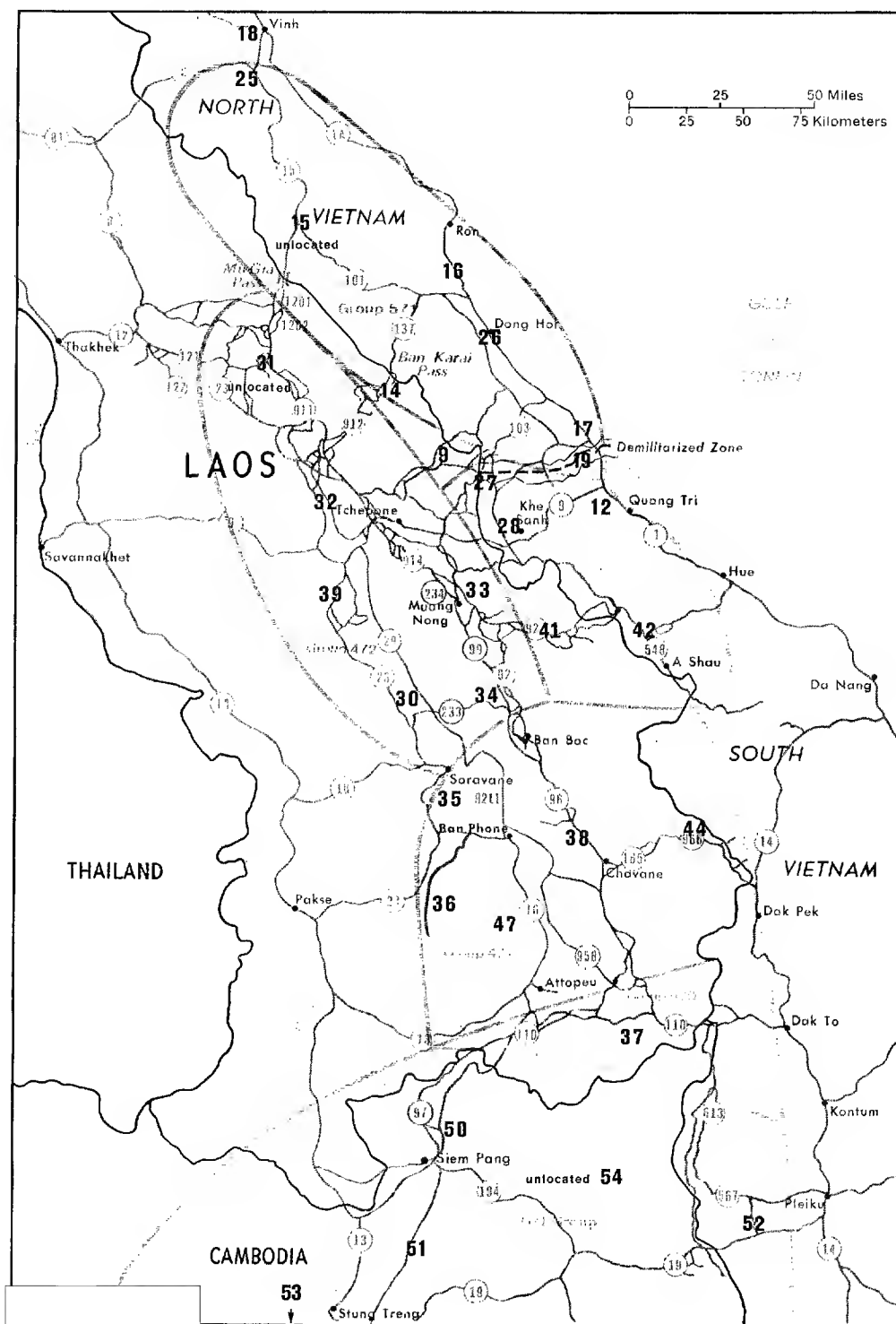
20. Tank activity was also detected in the Laotian Panhandle during the reporting period. For example, on 3 February a tank group, possibly with 10 tanks, was en route to an undisclosed location in Group 472's area (central Panhandle). Steps were being taken by elements of Binh Trams 32 and 34 to alleviate the persistent problems with petroleum supply that have plagued tank movements much of the dry season. In related activity, COMINT revealed that tanks were to be used in attacks scheduled for early February west of Muong Phine as part of the Communist drive on Muong Phalane.

21. Reporting on logistical activity in the Laos/Cambodia border has been sparse, but a recently received 1 February message revealed heavy vehicle activity. A total of 227 vehicles reported en route to various destinations included 37 to Binh Tram 50, 73 to Binh Tram 53, 39 to COSVN, and 78 to the B-3 Front. Confirmation of heavy activity in these areas was provided in photography [redacted] which showed Route 97 through northeastern Cambodia and Route 613 in the B-3 Front in excellent condition and apparently sustaining heavy vehicle activity. COMINT received at the end of the reporting period indicated that this activity was continuing.

Logistical Developments in South Vietnam

22. Significant Communist logistical activity was reported in most regions of South Vietnam during the period. The Communists have apparently succeeded in delivering some supplies by sea into enemy-controlled territory in southern MR 1. Photography [redacted] revealed large stacks of supplies on a beach in southern Quang Ngai Province. A small cargo vessel, possibly an infiltration trawler, also was detected standing a few miles offshore. The Communists apparently prepared this area for such activity by the destruction a few days earlier of a South Vietnamese coastal radar site. In Quang Tri Province, at least 45 vehicles -- probably cargo trucks -- were observed in [redacted] photography on Routes 9 and 608 just east of the Laotian border. Included were 30 vehicles near Khe Sanh. Complete coverage of Route 608 revealed vehicles on all but two open segments.

23. In MR 3, heavy Communist logistical activity was reported near the eastern Cambodia/southern South Vietnam border area. On 4 February a convoy of 75 loaded trucks was spotted moving south on Route 246 in Tay Ninh Province several miles below the Cambodian border. The following day, another southbound truck convoy was sighted in northern



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Tay Ninh Province, while 52 elephants were observed heading south toward Tay Ninh. This transport activity apparently is being staged from recently reestablished border base areas around Mimot, Krek, and Kompong Trach in Cambodia. Also in MR 3, [] since 28 January the Communists have increased the movement of supplies from Cambodian bases to southern Binh Long Province, some 50 miles north of Saigon, where Communist forces were offering strong resistance to recent South Vietnamese sweep operations.

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24. In the Delta, Communist ordnance shops in the coastal province of Kien Giang reportedly have been ordered to continue manufacturing weapons during 1973 and to increase production of mines and boobytraps. Communist munitions workshops are known to be in operation in several parts of the Delta, and plans to establish several more in Phuoc Long Province in northern MR 3 during the cease-fire period were recently revealed. [] the Communists will attempt to procure more goods internally than in the past. Measures to facilitate access to local markets and to increase cooperation from the South Vietnamese populace reportedly are now being undertaken. These moves by the Communists may reflect their intention to increase logistical self-sufficiency in the southern half of the country in anticipation of declining availability of supplies via overland infiltration corridors.

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Northern Laos

25. Enemy logistic activity detected in northern Laos during the period was not unusually heavy, but it was clear that preparations were in progress to facilitate the heavy - 6,600 tons - movement of supplies from North Vietnam scheduled during the first three weeks of February. Photography [] indicated that repair work was in progress on Route 6 southwest of Sam Neua and that a new road was under construction connecting Routes 6 and 621 in the same area. Communications intercepted from North Vietnam on 3 February confirmed that some emphasis will be placed on the use of Route 6 for the shipment of supplies from North Vietnam. The route will probably be used in addition to Route 7, the major artery between North Vietnam and northern Laos, to move supplies into the general area of Ban Ban; in addition, some of the expected deliveries may be earmarked for Pathet Lao forces in Samneua Province.

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